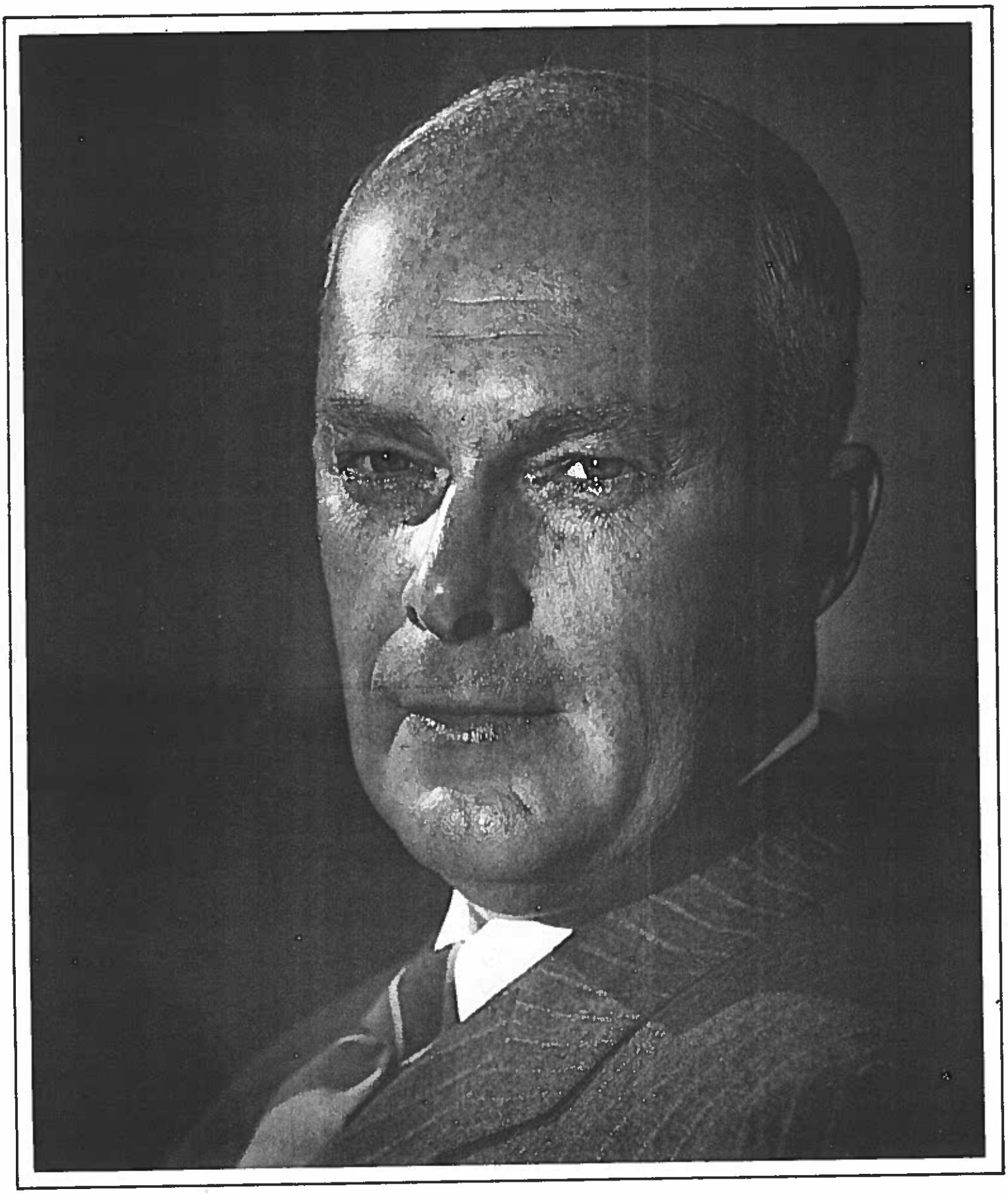


William T. Schwendler

April 1904 - January 1978

Bill Schwendler...'

Death came to William T. (Bill) Schwendler suddenly at his home in Farmingdale on Saturday, January 14. He was 73, the victim of heart disease. His passing marked the end of a distinguished career in the aerospace industry, one that spanned more than 50 years, nearly all of that period at Grumman.

He was one of the founders of Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation and had been active in its affairs since the company first opened its doors for business in January 1930, in a small, rented garage in Baldwin, Long Island.

Bill Schwendler had worked with Roy Grumman and Jake Swirbul at the Loening Aeronautical Engineering Corporation, but when the company was bought out by Keystone Aircraft and it was announced that there would be a move to Bristol, Pennsylvania, the three men decided to stay on Long Island and open up their own firm. They were joined by Clint Towl, Ed Poor, and Joe Stamm, and shortly after the stock market crash of 1929 set up shop in what had been an automobile showroom and garage.

Bill Schwendler was born in April 1904 at Winfield Junction, New York, a hamlet that no longer exists but at that time was located between Woodside and Elmhurst in Queens.

While a junior at New York University—he started working summers at age 14 to help pay his way to college—Bill was one of 10 students selected to take the first course in aeronautics offered at the school. From the time he graduated from NYU in 1924 until his death, he devoted his energies to the profession he knew and liked and did best—aircraft design.

Recalling those early days during conversation recently, he remembered the time at Loening when they were working on the development of an amphibian that could carry businessmen from places like Long Island and Connecticut to New York City. "One day," he said with just a trace of a smile, "I was flying as co-pilot and we flew under

The early years. A young Bill Schwendler (top) looks confidently into the future, in which he is shown working with Dick Hutton (above) on F6F Hellcat design, checking a drawing with Roy Grumman and Jake Swirbul, and meeting with British visitors in the 40s.

And later. Bill Schwendler
couragement as Wernher Von Br
examining production progress o
George Doukas; following award
and, most recently, exchanging
"Citizen of the Year" award by Na

..'chief architect of our design excellence'

all the bridges over the East River. You couldn't do that now with all the clearances you have to get before taking off, and, of course, the city is much more populated now than it was 50 years ago. But those were great old days. . . we'll never see them again."

'We were all young'

And later, at Baldwin, during the infancy of the company, he recalled that, "We were all young, and you know, you don't think about things as seriously as you do when you get older. We knew that we could always get jobs, but we knew we didn't want to have anything to do with Bristol." That knowledge, and their youth, helped them overcome such embarrassments as the time at Baldwin, he related, when "We sat right in the show window and the kids would come along and laugh at us and pound on the glass. We really did the cheapest thing we could—we got Bon Ami and coated the inside of the glass so they couldn't see us."

Hint of things to come

From 1930 to 1950, his emergence as the chief designer of an engineering and manufacturing team that produced such formidable aircraft as the F4F Wildcat, F6F Hellcat, TBF Avenger, and F9F Panther paralleled the rise of Grumman to a preeminent position in this country's aircraft industry.

Preceding those successes, Bill Schwendler gave a hint of what was to come when he designed the first practical retractable landing gear for an amphibious float, and followed that up by designing the first retractable gear for a fighter—the Grumman FF-1. Although the retractable landing gear made the FF-1 much heavier than other military fighters, the reduced drag permitted the plane to fly some 20 mph faster than any of its contemporaries, a remarkable accomplishment at the time.

During World War II the company earned the affectionate sobriquet, "Grumman Iron Works," but the salute from Navy and Marine pilots didn't come by accident.

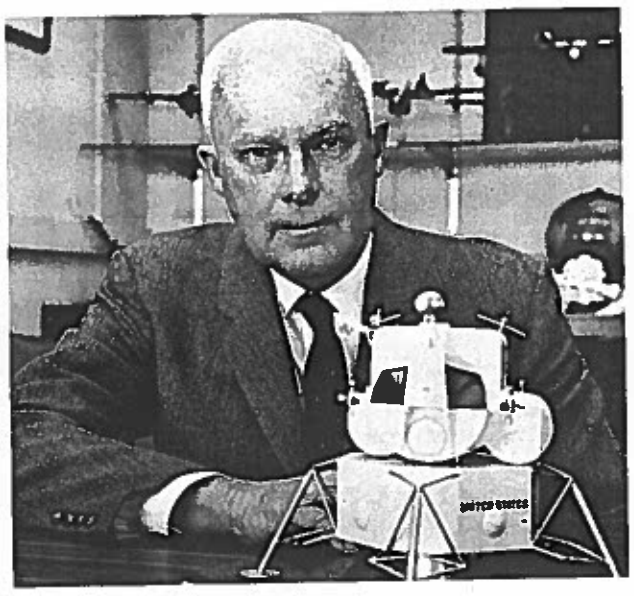
"In the beginning of World War II," said Schwendler, "I established some ground rules with Pete Erlandsen. We were going to build an airplane that nobody could break up, nobody could shoot down. That was our philosophy. Some of them did break up, of course, but I think we had the reputation of building a pretty strong machine. So the 'Grumman Iron Works' grew out of our design philosophy."

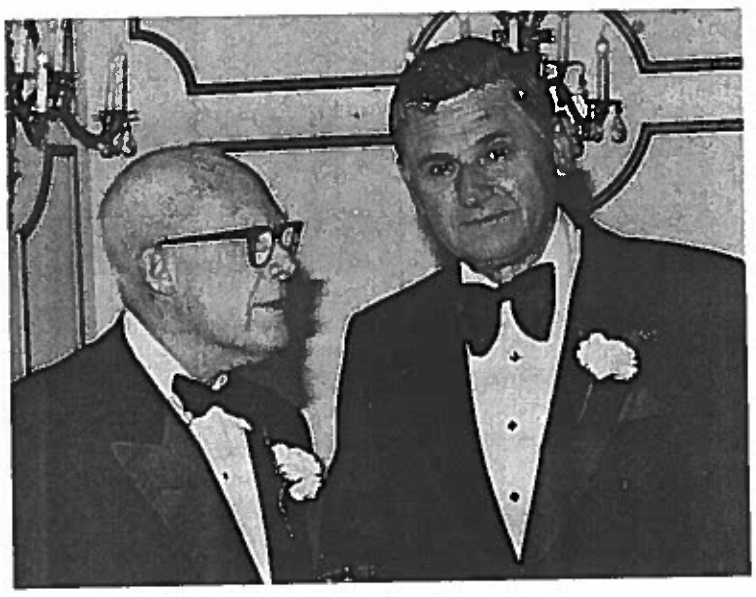
But hot fighter planes were not the only reason Grumman drew attention during the war. The company had come up with some unusual approaches to working relationships. "Some of the things were really started at Loening—they always had time to talk with employees and it really paid off," Schwendler recalled. "We started out with this philosophy of talking to people, discussing any personal problems they might have. We were a small group and there was an opportunity for us to talk with anybody on the floor and for them to talk with us. We were pretty much a shirt-sleeve organization and that was the beginning of what we later called our 'open-door policy'.

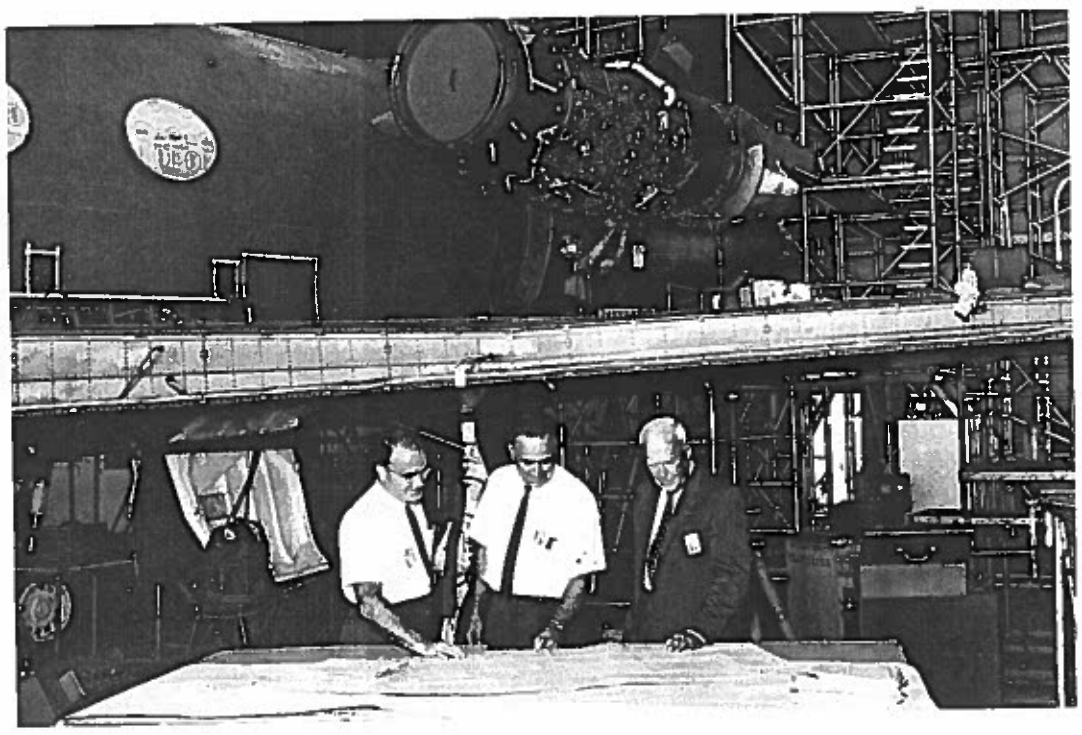
"Sometimes we forget that Grumman helped pioneer all-day babycare centers so that mothers could work on the assembly line and in the offices during the war. We instituted a special 'green truck' service to make sure people could get to work—if their car needed a push, we'd get them one; if they needed parts to repair the car, we'd have somebody get them a lift in to work and then buy the parts during the workday so there wouldn't be any lost time. We started Christmas bonuses (since folded-in to weekly paychecks) and Christmas turkeys, and the 25-year luncheon for all of our silver anniversary people, active and retired."

Jets come on the scene

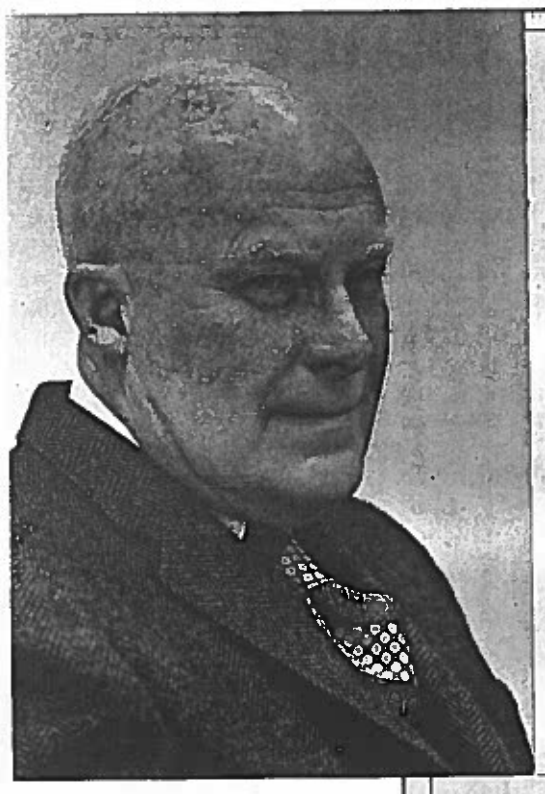
In 1940 Bill Schwendler had been elected vice president, and at the close of the war he was elected executive vice president, but his love affair with aircraft design continued unabated. When Grumman ran into a perplexing problem on its first jet fighter design—"jet engines available in this country at the time didn't have sufficient thrust for carrier take-offs"—Schwendler and Dick Hutton convinced the Navy to allow use of a British engine. After



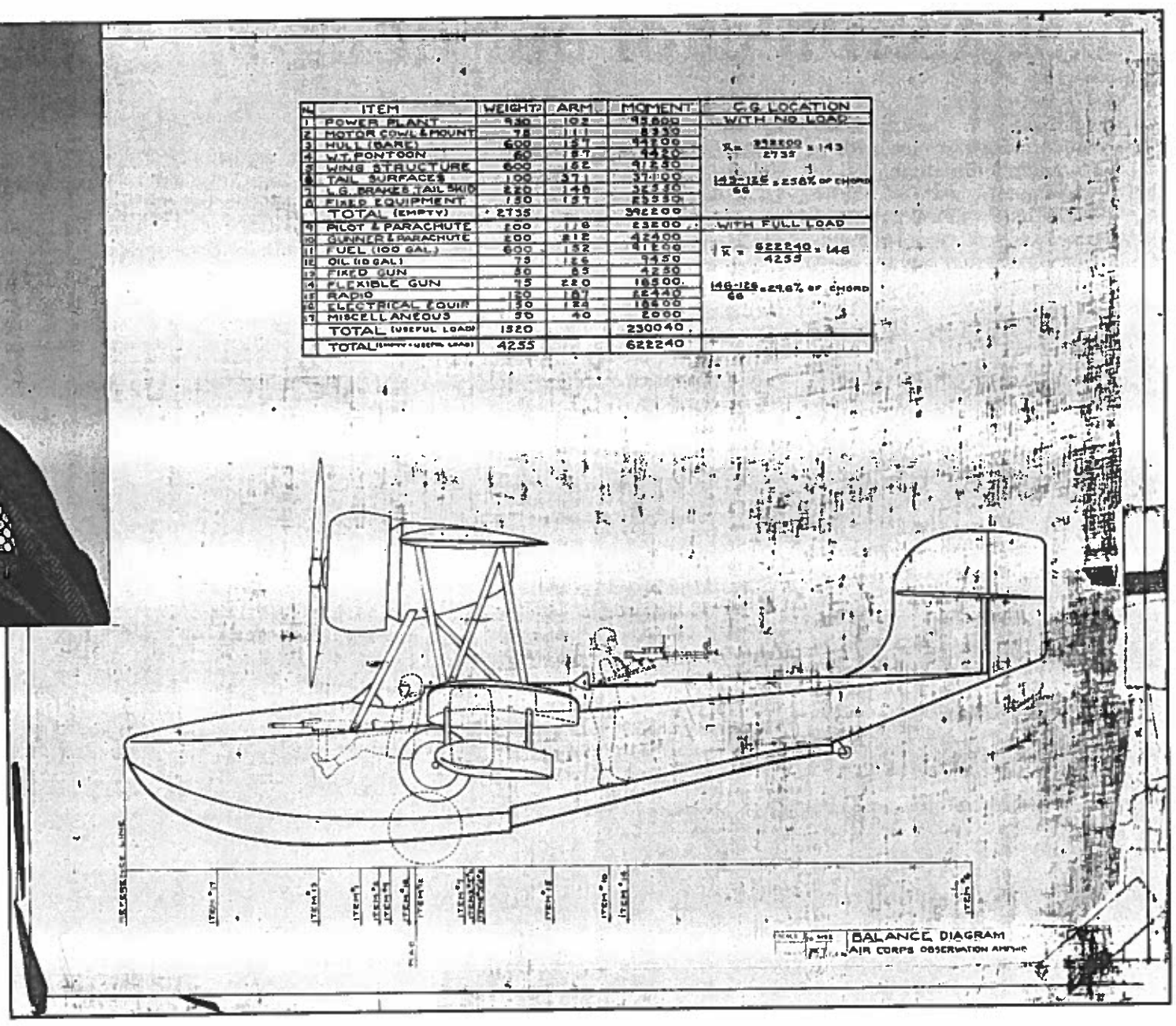




hwendler is shown with Jake Swirbul offering en- Von Braun tries spacecraft mockup on for size; ·ogress on Gulfstream II with Grant Hedrick and ıg award of Lunar Module contract to Grumman; ıanging notes with George Skurla following Bill's ırd by Nassau County Boy Scouts.



Looking back. Bill Schwendler's first design for Grumman, dated Jan. 18, 1930 was checked by Roy Grumman.



NO.	ITEM	WEIGHT	ARM	MOMENT	C.G. LOCATION
1	POWER PLANT	930	102	95,600	WITH NO LOAD
2	MOTOR COWL & MOUNT	78	111	8,330	
3	HULL (BARE)	600	157	94,200	$\bar{X} = \frac{378500}{2735} = 143$
4	W.T. PONTOON	60	157	9,420	
5	WING STRUCTURE	600	152	91,250	
6	TAIL SURFACES	100	371	37,000	$\frac{143-125}{66} = 27.6\%$ OF CHORD
7	L.G. BRAKES TAIL SKID	220	148	32,530	
8	FIXED EQUIPMENT	150	157	23,550	
	TOTAL (EMPTY)	2735		392200	
9	PILOT & PARACHUTE	200	116	23200	WITH FULL LOAD
10	GUNNER & PARACHUTE	200	212	42400	
11	FUEL (100 GAL.)	600	152	91200	$\bar{X} = \frac{622240}{4255} = 146$
12	OIL (10 GAL.)	75	126	9450	
13	FIXED GUN	50	85	4250	
14	FLEXIBLE GUN	75	220	16500	$\frac{146-125}{66} = 29.6\%$ OF CHORD
15	RADIO	120	187	22440	
16	ELECTRICAL EQUIP.	130	128	16600	
17	MISCELLANEOUS	90	40	2000	
	TOTAL (USEFUL LOAD)	1520		230040	
	TOTAL (EMPTY + USEFUL LOAD)	4255		622240	

that temporary obstacle was surmounted, he and his design team were off and running again, stretching the F9F Panther series through a F9F-6 swept-wing version (the Cougar), a photo ship, and a two-place trainer.

There followed the XF10F Jaguar, and though it never went into production, it was the first swing-wing aircraft ever to fly in this country and provided Grumman with the design experience to tackle a later swing-wing fighter, the F-14 Tomcat.

In the mid-50s the F11F Tiger started coming off the production line, but it soon became painfully clear that the Navy planned to buy only a small number of the sleek, lightweight fighters. With the A-6 and E-2 still years away from production, the company's fortunes seemed to be ebbing.

First corporate transport

About that time, however, a number of inquiries from former customers of the Grumman Goose, Widgeon, and Mallard put the company back into the commercial business. And Schwendler, who was by then chairman of the corporation's executive committee, was credited with being the "guiding light" of the new project—the Grumman Gulfstream I prop-jet, executive transport.

"It wasn't a big program when compared to some of the others we've had, but it created jobs for people and it helped Grumman's image with the public," said Bill in assessing that project. "It was in a class by itself." Later, of course, the twin-jet Gulfstream II proved a very worthy successor. That's the way it has always been; when a new aircraft started taking shape on the drawing boards, Bill Schwendler could be found intimately involved in its development.

But the challenge, the drama, and the excitement of producing outstanding aircraft had become tinged with growing concern in recent years. Getting additional business was becoming more and more difficult, and layoffs were gnawing at him because "nothing bothers me more than to have to lay off a good man, a fellow who has done a good job for many years." Part of the problem, he thought, was that "in the defense industry today, winning the next competition apparently has nothing to do with past performance. It's based entirely on the pieces of paper that have been prepared—volumes and volumes of them—and the price. In any other business, automobiles, for instance, you try to establish a reputation. But the business we're in is nothing like that—a lot of people don't realize how competitive it really is. It's a shame. . . and it's serious. I don't think Washington realizes it, but I think it will affect the standard of the industry in the future."

On Bill Schwendler's death, Jack Bierwirth, Grumman Board Chairman, said of him: "From Grumman's very first engineering assignment—designing a retractable landing gear that could stand up to the demands of military flight operations—right up to his retirement, Bill Schwendler was a part of every important effort of the company. His lifetime concern was quality. He believed that everything we made had to be the best, and his attitude set the standards for the entire company. In that way, we will have him with us for years to come."

George Skurla, chairman and president of Grumman Aerospace, called Bill Schwendler "the chief architect of our design excellence that has become the hallmark and the heritage of Grumman. But he wasn't concerned only with technical applications; in a very quiet way he was a real humanitarian who demonstrated his concern over the years for all Grumman people. We will miss him."

Bill Schwendler leaves his wife Mabel—"Mibs" as she is known to family friends—who has shared his association with Grumman for more than 40 years, a son Bill Jr., and daughters Olga and Hazel.

Bill Schwendler once said about Grumman that "I've been so attached to this place, and worked here so steadily all my life, I can hardly visualize *not* being here."

With all his honors and awards, his corporate position and personal wealth, Bill Schwendler remained approachable to the very end.

Yes, it will be hard to visualize not having him here with us.

GRUMMAN plane news

SPECIAL MEMORIAL ISSUE

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